

Step 5: Making Decisions - Where to Focus Your Efforts?

Now that you've completed the analysis of the worksite assessment and employee survey and taken a look at the array of program strategies to be considered, it's time to narrow your focus. By looking at what you currently offer, you should be able to see the gaps in areas where there are additional strategies that could be implemented. By identifying those gaps and comparing them with the current health habits and interests of your employees that were gathered in the employee survey, you should be able to match high priority gaps with high priority employee needs or interests. Finally, by answering questions about the importance, cost, time, effort and potential number of employees that will be reached by your program strategies, you will be ready to select what will be included in your wellness program. A model to walk you through this process is included later in this chapter in the form of a Recommendation Table.

What do I need to consider?

As you make plans on where to focus your wellness efforts, consider that some efforts may have greater impact than others. Your wellness programming can include many components, such as:

- ☐ Health screening and assessment
- ☐ Education through presentations, printed materials and web resources
- ☐ Program activities, including "campaigns" over a specified time period
- ☐ Environmental change
- ☐ Policy change

All of your programming should involve creation of a supportive social and physical environment where healthy decisions are the norm. Part of creating this environment is to clearly define the organization's expectations regarding healthy behaviors, and implementation of policies that promote health and reduce risk of disease.

All of the components listed above have merit, but changing the environment and changing policy is crucial to affecting change in most health habits. Policies create the opportunity for widespread behavioral change because they change the existing "rules," which can have a powerful effect on employee behavior and habits. Environmental changes, both physical and cultural, provide options or opportunities to adopt healthier habits and can also result in widespread change.

Company policies and changes in the work environment will affect or influence individual behavior at work, which may also lead to changes outside of work. In many cases, policy and environmental changes make it easier to make the better health choice. An example would be serving bagels and fruit instead of pastries at company events. Some other simple examples are:

Formal written policies:

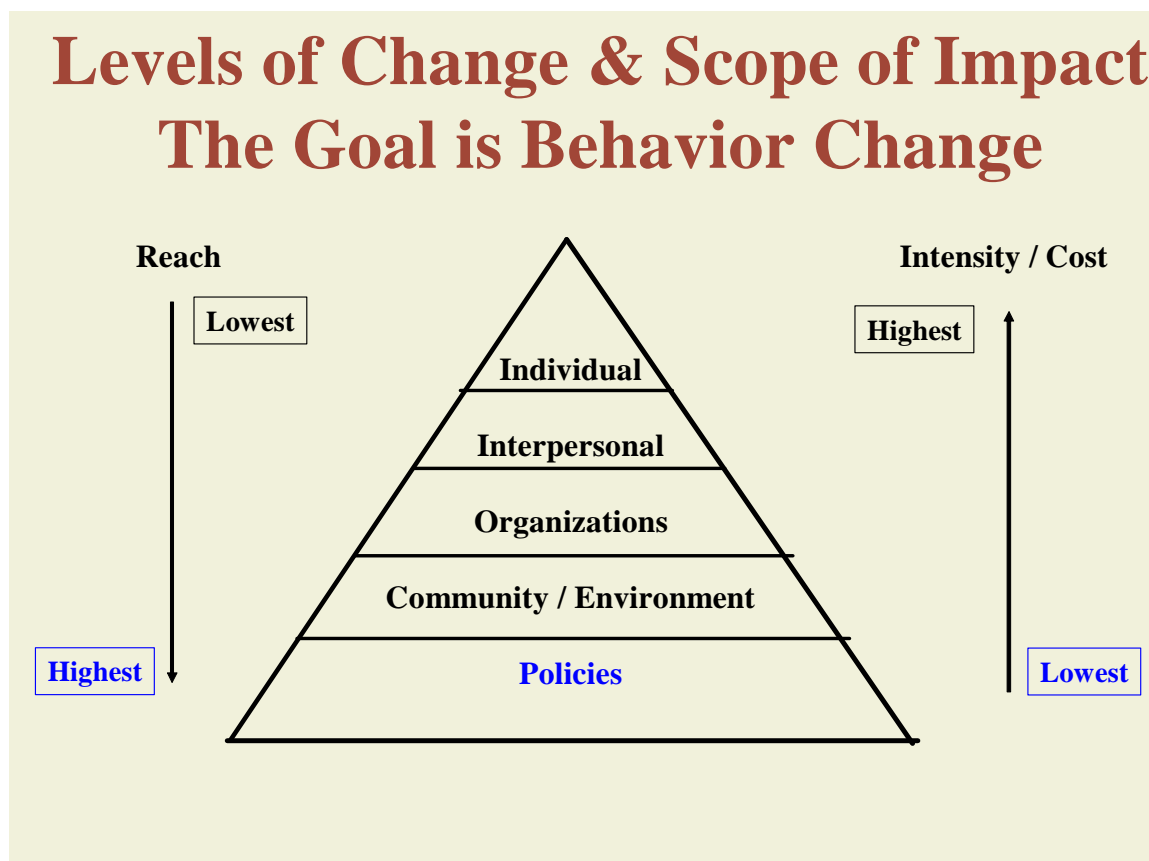
- ❖ Guidelines for ordering food for company events
- ❖ No smoking on company property
- ❖ Company cost-sharing for health club memberships

Environmental changes or cues:

- ❖ Outdoor bike racks
- ❖ Labeling or highlighting health food choices
- ❖ Posters promoting healthy messages

Listed in the program section (Step Four) were a number of policy or environmental changes that you could make. You should use the planning tools in this section to determine which changes you want to make first. Think about addressing some of the easy changes first to get a taste of success and show that your wellness program is working. As your program develops you can always tackle some of the more difficult issues.

Unlike trying to impact change at an individual level, environmental and policy changes have the ability to impact large groups of people and will likely provide the most “bang for the buck.” The diagram below illustrates why changes in the environment or changes in policy are so important.



What the diagram illustrates is that interventions that target individual behavior change take a great deal of resources and impact only one person at a time. Policy and higher level interventions targeting communities and organizations have a much greater potential impact. Although your wellness strategies should address as many levels as possible, it's also important to focus on areas where the greatest potential benefit could occur.

Employee Readiness: Stages of Change and Program Considerations

A major factor to be aware of is that people vary greatly in their readiness to change behavior. In your survey of employees it may be helpful in developing programming to know what percent of employees are at the various stages. Most people go through five stages in changing behaviors:

1. **Pre-contemplation** – At this stage they are not thinking about changing their behavior in the near future.
2. **Contemplation** – They are beginning to seriously think about changing their behavior in the near future (next six months).
3. **Preparation** – At this stage most people have tried to change their behavior at least once in the past year, and they are thinking about trying again within the next month.
4. **Action** – Real steps are being actively taken to change their behavior. This is the stage where a slip is most likely to occur.
5. **Maintenance** – This stage applies to people who have changed their behavior for over six months and are now maintaining that healthy behavior.

People can move from one stage to another in order, but they can also move back and forth between the various stages before they adopt a behavior for good. Again, a slip is not a failure, but an important part of the learning and behavior change process. Most people may attempt healthy behavior change several times before they succeed and the chance of success increases every time.

The pre-survey of employees (Appendix C) has questions for physical activity (Q #1), nutrition (Q #3) and tobacco use (Q #6) that ask what stage an individual is at. You should look at the results from these questions to better understand where your employees are at and tailor your programming accordingly.

Developing the Wellness Plan Content

One way to develop your program activities is to take your worksite assessment checklist and evaluate the areas where no policy or program exists or areas where some policy or program exists, but can be improved. For each of these items, ask the following questions:

- ❖ How important is the item?
- ❖ How much will it cost to implement the item?
- ❖ How much time and effort would be needed to implement the item?
- ❖ How great is the potential “reach” or how many employees may be affected.
- ❖ How well does the item match employee’s interests? Use the survey results to help answer this question.

You should also “package” your activities whenever possible so that they build off of each other, rather than pick a set of unrelated activities that are not connected. By providing the right mix of programs, you can get a multiplier effect that is greater than the effect of adding up individual activities. “Packaging” related strategies will lead to greater participation and long term success. For instance, having a policy that encourages physical activity on break time, coupled with using pedometers as incentives and then providing maps or on-site trails to get staff out walking will lead to greater success.

Recommendations – Narrowing the Scope

You can use the Recommendation Table below to help narrow the scope of your wellness program. Once you've identified possible areas to focus on, asking the questions about importance, cost, time, effort and reach should get you to a very specific set of activities to implement.

Recommendation Table

Instructions: Rate each of the recommendations identified in the Worksite Wellness Assessment on the following aspects: importance, cost, time and commitment. Rate each on a scale of 1-5 (low-high) using the chart below. Higher scores should indicate priority items to implement.							
Importance	How important is the recommendation? 1 = Not at all important 3 = Somewhat important 5 = Very important						
Cost	How expensive would it be to plan and implement the recommendation? 1 = Very expensive 3 = Moderately expensive 5 = Not expensive						
Time	How much time and effort would be needed to implement the recommendation? 1 = Extensive time & effort 3 = Moderate time & effort 5 = Low time & effort						
Commitment	How enthusiastic would employees be about implementing the recommendation? 1 = Not enthusiastic 3 = Moderately enthusiastic 5 = Very enthusiastic						
Reach	How many employees will likely be affected by this recommendation? 1 = Very few employees 3 = Some employees 5 = Most or all employees						
Item #	Recommendations	Importance	Cost	Time	Commitment	Reach	Points / Ranking
13	Create policy for use of break & lunchtime to be active	4	5	5	4	5	23
19	Install bike racks to encourage biking to work	4	3	4	4	3	18
27	Provide an on-site exercise facility?	5	1	1	5	3	15
41	Make microwaves available to heat meals	4	3	5	4	5	21
52	Policy to prohibit smoking on property	5	5	5	3	5	23

(A blank Recommendation Table can be found in Appendix D)

What can you do with this data? – Some examples.

If you have limited resources and can't implement all of your company's recommendations, you should look at total score and category scores to help select priorities. The policy items (#13 & #52) have low cost and great reach so they might be the items to implement first. On the other end of the spectrum, an on-site fitness facility (item #27) might be problematic because of cost and an alternative such as subsidized memberships to local physical activity facilities may be considered.

Be realistic!

Limit your initial set of activities so you can focus your efforts and have some early successes. You can always expand your program as it matures, but a realistic set of objectives to begin with will require fewer resources and will keep you from being overwhelmed.

Action Plan & Worksheet

Once you've decided on your priorities, you should develop a specific action plan to implement the programming you've selected. The action plan would include:

- ❖ The overall goals and objectives of your wellness program.
- ❖ Specific recommendations on strategies to implement. These need to be clearly stated and measurable or your evaluation won't be meaningful;
- ❖ The chosen activities;
- ❖ The staff, resources and materials needed to make it happen;
- ❖ The time frame for completion;
- ❖ The evaluation plan to measure results.

The action plan can also be used as part of a presentation to give to management to sell them on your wellness program and get buy-in for the specific strategies and activities you plan to implement for the program. A sample action plan is shown below.

Action Plan Worksheet

Recommendations	Describe the strategies selected from the Recommendation Table			
Activities	List the activities required to meet the recommendation			
Materials, Resources and Personnel	List the individuals who will do the work; and the resources and tools they need to get the job done.			
Time Frame	When will implementation begin? How long will it take to finish?			
Evaluation	How will you measure your successes and/or misfortunes?			
Recommendations: Strategies to Implement	Activities	Materials, Resources & Personnel	Time Frame	Evaluation Method
1. Provide an incentive based programs to encourage activity (i.e. pedometer walking campaigns).	Walking "Challenge"	Walking teams, Team Captains Pedometers, Recording sheets	3 months May- July	Pre/Post survey of activity levels
2. Offer appealing, low-cost, healthful worksite food options, such as fruits and vegetables, juices, and low-fat dairy products in vending machines and snack bars and break rooms.	Inventory current options Increase healthy vending options	Mary Smith <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Sample</div>	4 months Jan - April	Count of healthy food options before and after the initiative
3. Support physical activity during duty time (flex-time)?	Draft and implement company policy on use of break & lunch time for activity	Wellness workgroup and staff input Management sign-off	1 month January	Policy in place. Could also be a question as part of an annual survey
4.				

(A blank Action Plan can be found in Appendix E)

Maintaining Interest & Motivation

Once you start a program you will have a range of employee participants. Some will already be very engaged in being active and eating well and your program will only reinforce and enhance their health. On the other end of the spectrum will be people who may not engage no matter what you do. The remaining group is probably the largest group in most organizations: people who are various stages of readiness to improve their health given the right type of programming and motivation. Summarized below are some tips you may want to employ once your program is up and running.

Key Factors

In today's society there are many key factors that influence people's health behaviors.

Consider the following list in maintaining participation in your program:

1. **TIME.** People are busy, so the more you can work activity and healthy eating into their existing schedules, the better your chances for success. Example: A walk at lunch doesn't take away from existing time, it just uses it differently. Also look at the time of the day and length of any activity you might be promoting, since both time components may be factors.
2. **ACCESS.** How accessible is your programming. Is it onsite or at a nearby site? Do you offer access at breaks or outside of normal work hours?
3. **KNOWLEDGE.** People need to know "Why" they are participating (the benefits) and also will need information about the "How to" in areas that are not commonly known. There is a wealth of information available on many wellness topics that can be found in the resource sections in Step Four).
4. **COST.** Being able to provide no cost or reduced cost programs will help participation rates. Coupled with incentives for participation, rates of participation will likely increase dramatically.
5. **INCENTIVES.** Some people need incentives to get started in a wellness program. A full list of incentive options can be found on the next page.

Key Time Periods

Good habits are often difficult to develop. There tends to be some critical times when people drop out or fall off of a physical activity or diet program. The first key time zone seems to be around **6 weeks**. If people can start and stay consistent with a program through the first 6 weeks, they have made a fairly serious commitment to incorporate the habits into their lifestyle. The second key time is at about **6 months**. Those who made it past 6 weeks may get bored and/or distracted from their program after several months. If people can get past 6 months and sustain behavior through a full set of weather seasons, they have a very good chance of making the changes permanent.

Consider these time periods and think about how you can "boost" your employees to get them past these critical time markers. Promoting individual or group "challenges", using incentives, or increased publicity/marketing are a few of the things you can do to help get your employees through these key time periods

Goal Setting

Setting goals has been shown to lead to better participation and more people making a strong commitment. Whether it be a team goal of walking the equivalent of once around

Wisconsin or an individual goal of so many miles or minutes of activity, the fact that there is something concrete to shoot for increases the likelihood people will stick with the program.

Buddy Systems or Team Goals

The social aspects of improving one's health cannot be underestimated. Many studies point to tight social groups being the backbone for a successful campaign because each individual has a commitment to something bigger than themselves and besides, it's just more fun for most people. Build your program around some type of teams or partners and see what happens.

Team "Campaigns"

Some people like competition and others don't. Nevertheless, a worksite wide campaign has the advantage of keeping the message more visible and alive. Encourage campaign participation, but make it voluntary so that those who prefer that type of motivation can join while others can participate in their own way and at their own pace. If the idea of a campaign seems like too much work, consider tapping into existing campaigns where someone else provides resources for you. The Lighten Up Campaign is one example where you can enroll employee teams and let Lighten Up do the work for a nominal registration fee. Find out more information at: http://www.sportsinwisconsin.com/health/index.php?category_id=983

Incentives

Incentives are often helpful in maintaining or raising interest. Significant incentives such as cash or health insurance rebates have proven to be very strong motivators for employee participation. However, even smaller incentives can be beneficial. Listed below are some sample incentives:

- ❖ **Achievement awards.** Verbal praise and a pat on the back are motivational to some, but a token of recognition of achievement may offer more. A colorful certificate to congratulate an employee for achieving a health-related goal is one example.
- ❖ **Public recognition.** Announced recognition at campaign mid-point or wrap-up festivities.
- ❖ **Food.** Include some healthy foods to kick-off, revitalize or wrap up a wellness campaign.
- ❖ **Entertainment.** Events serve a purpose in jump-starting, reenergizing or wrapping up a campaign. Having entertainment of any kind can boost morale.
- ❖ **Merchandise.** There is a long list of merchandise incentives, including sports equipment and small gift certificates to use at local merchants.
- ❖ **Monetary rewards.** Nothing says incentive better than cash. Worksites that have used cash or rebates as an incentive have shown much higher participation rates.
- ❖ **Time off.** Maybe the next best incentive to cash, or for some people even better. This type of incentive makes good business sense if the number of absences drops significantly and attendance is used as one of the criteria.